

Pier limits win approval from voters

The Patriot Ledger

March 16, 2004

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The Patriot Ledger

DUXBURY

Town meeting voters last night enacted several restrictions on pier construction in Duxbury Bay.

However, the amended bylaw fell short of what its authors intended to achieve, as a proposed 150-foot pier-free zone adjacent to town landings was reduced to 50 feet.

The pier, access and shoreline study committee, which spent two years studying Duxbury's 22 miles of shoreline, proposed the new bylaws in an effort to check pier proliferation in the bay.

Although the committee's goal was to make piers as minimal and unobtrusive as possible, everyone agreed that piers are necessary, Chairman William Ten-Hoor said.

"There's nobody on this committee who doesn't like piers," he said. "Certainly at least a few are necessary, and they're very desirable in a seaside town."

However, he said, too many piers can overwhelm the shoreline and impede public access at town landings.

One measure approved last night created several waterfront scenic areas in which new and rebuilt piers must conform to certain size constraints.

Voters originally rejected the proposal without discussion. The article, which needed a two-thirds majority, failed, 131-90. Reconsidered later, it was approved.

The new bylaw establishes six waterfront scenic areas, including the view of The Nook along Bay Road, the view of Eagle's Nest along Marshall Street, the west end of the Powder Point Bridge, and the Bluefish River along St. George Street, Washington Street, Powder Point Avenue and King Caesar Road.

A more stringent proposal to ban pier construction within 150 feet of any town landing was altered so the buffer stretches only 50 feet in either direction.

Duxbury town meeting voters last night:

- Approved bylaws limiting pier construction in Duxbury Bay.
- Authorized the town moderator to appoint a town government study committee, which will report its findings in 2006.
- Adopted an amended zoning map of the town.
- Adopted a bylaw allowing the planning board to appoint two alternate members.
- Established a local housing partnership, which is to help develop affordable housing in Duxbury.

Many waterfront property owners showed up to support the reduced buffer zone.

The proposed 150-foot restriction "takes away rights of some property owners, including myself, without any compensation," Livingston Davies of Midway Road said.

Davies argued that prohibiting pier construction would decrease property values by about \$100,000 per parcel.

Four of the seven pier study committee members supported the 150-foot buffer, but three thought 50 feet was sufficient. Voters went along with an amendment offered by member Shawn Dahlen for the smaller distance.

The 150-foot zone would have prevented 16 property owners from applying for pier permits, but the 50-foot zone will affect only one property owner.

The pier debate took up most of last night's town meeting session. Fifteen articles remain and are to be taken up at 7:30 tonight at the middle school gymnasium.

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